Education Today—

University Presses Are Busy

By KENNETH STARCK

THE TITLES probably wouldn't send you rushing to the nearest bookstore, and you're hardly likely to curl up with one of these tomes on a sofa.

Furthermore, these books generally don't make money for their publishers. More often they wind up losing it.

THAT SUCH BOOKS even exist would seem irrelevant except that:

In 1963-64 more than seven million volumes were sold for 16 million dollars.

And more important, the books fill an informational void by capturing and preserving a part of the American culture that might be lost to the past.

The leading role in publishing these books is played by something called the university press. It is simply a publishing house owned and operated by a university and dedicated to printing works of a scholarly—which sometimes means esoteric — nature.

Each year the nation's estimated 75 university presses, including a number in the South, are doing a bigger and more professional job of presenting books that deal with the history, folklore, literature, art and scientific developments indigenous to their locales.

Among the South's best known university presses are those at the state universities of North Carolina, Louisiana State, Texas and Oklahoma. The universities of Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky and Miami also are leaving a mark on the publishing world.

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THE ALABAMA PRESS typifies the growth of Southern campus presses. Since it was founded in 1945, it has turned out 100 works, including several that have won regional and national awards.

Recent Alabama-published books include "American Civil Military Decision," "The Alabama Confederate Reader" and "Evolution of Cost Accounting."

The titles aren's geared to win a place on best-seller lists, but as Ernst A. Seeman, director of the Alabama press, says, the main mission of the university press is to "put the results of scholarly research into permanently available form on the premise that once found, truth should have as wide a distribution as possible."

Even Memphis State University, through its little-known Memphis State University Press, has got in the act. It is a one-man operation directed by Enoch L. Mitchell, chairman emeritus of Memphis State's history department, and supported solely by donations.

Since it was established 10 years ago, the press has published five books. The most recent, issued early in the summer, was "Politics on the Southwestern Frontier: Arkansas Territory" by Lonnie J. White, Memphis State assistant history professor.

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"UNIVERSITY PRESSES publish a great many works that otherwise would not be published," says Mr. Mitchell, who doesn't get paid for his work. "They form a valuable aid to research."

The campus press usually prints in small runs of about 3,000 copies, but the volumes find their way to an important part of the nation's brainpower. As nonprofit operations, they can publish manuscripts that would not be profitable for commercial publishers.

UT's Press publications include "The Lovingood Papers 1863," a reprint of some of the humorous tales of George Washington Harris, and "Great Smoky Mountains Wildflowers Enlarged Edition," an expanded version of a full-color picture book that sold 15,000 copies in two years.